

NEWS BRIEFS

Japanese Forces Test Improved Munition At Yuma Proving Ground

On April 1, 2001, shortly after a cargo vessel carrying two self-propelled howitzers and their associated equipment departed Japan en route to the United States, the vessel sank to the bottom of the ocean. Approximately \$56 million worth of equipment was lost. The trip to Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), AZ, where the 155mm Improved Conventional Munition (ICM) test was to be conducted, was postponed. The test would not take place until the Japanese Ground Self Defense Forces purchased two new howitzers and more equipment. Finally, in May, approximately 70 Japanese representatives arrived to begin operational testing on the improved munitions. The test concluded in September.

Members of the Japanese ground forces have frequently visited YPG to test munitions and a self-propelled howitzer system. The main reason they come to YPG for testing is because of the long ranges and the fact that Japanese ranges contain extremely limited airspace. "Japan does not offer us the airspace for safely firing at high elevations. Our country does not have large test areas like YPG, though it is extremely hot for us in the Arizona summer," said COL Takashi Kizu, Chief of Testing. "Another important factor is that there is little rain, which helps keep our testing on schedule," he added.

The 155mm ICM is a base-bleed projectile that achieves extended distances (about 30 miles). Test managers fired approximately 900 rounds of ammunition during the course of the test. ICM projectiles contain submunitions that can be configured either for anti-personnel or anti-tank purposes.

Like all tests conducted at the proving ground, safety is always the highest priority. "Safety is the number one factor in our tests. Every morning before tests begin, a meeting is conducted to re-enforce the safety of everyone involved. The YPG test director goes over the daily test plan and CPT Hiroshige Uchiyama translates the information into Japanese. However, in the event that a problem occurs, all necessary safety measures are taken into consideration and the proper personnel are called to assist in solving the problem," said Kizu.

Personnel who provide some of the problem solving and technical support include representatives from the

U.S. Army Armaments Research, Development and Engineering Command, Picatinny Arsenal, NJ, and the Operations Support Command, Rock Island Arsenal, IL.

"We are here to technically support the test operation in our areas of expertise. We are available to assist when problems come up and help ensure that the tests are always being conducted within contractual requirements. We also serve as escorts for the Japanese because it is a requirement that foreigners always be formally escorted on a government installation," said Axel Torres, Co-production Project Officer from Rock Island.

The Japanese view these tests as high visibility activities. The Japanese government receives a daily update regarding the progress of the test. "We do this to ensure everything is on schedule and going along smoothly, and to reassure our government that we can succeed and meet the completion of the program's test date with no problems. Our goal is to succeed on our test project and to maintain an excellent relationship between the Japanese and U.S. government," said Kizu.

The preceding article was written by Yolie Canales, a Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground.

CONFERENCES

Ground Vehicle Survivability Symposium

The 14th annual U.S. Army Ground Vehicle Survivability Symposium (GVSS) will be held April 7-10, 2003, at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA. The symposium is sponsored by the Survivability Technology Area, U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command's Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TACOM-TARDEC). The GVSS provides a forum to announce accomplishments and discoveries and to discuss issues regarding ground vehicle survivability technology areas. The conference will be classified up to and including SECRET U.S. ONLY.

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